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March 17, 2006

### West Virginia Guard testing biometric ID gear

By [Rick Steelhammer](#)

Staff writer

Biometric identification gear developed in West Virginia is being used at the West Virginia National Guard's headquarters buildings, as well as 10 field locations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Iris-scanning identification technology produced through the U.S. Department of Defense's Biometrics Fusion Center in Clarksburg is being used to control access to key offices in the Guard's headquarters building.

Across Coonskin Drive, fingerprint-scanning gear is being used to control access to the National Guard's Operations Center.

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*West Virginia Adjutant General Allen E. Tackett gets his iris scanned before gaining access to his office suite at the West Virginia National Guard headquarters building in Charleston.*



*A biometric finger scanner controls access to the West Virginia National Guard's Operations Center.*

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"We're using their inventions and creations and testing them out," said Army Maj. Gen. Allen E. Tackett, the state's adjutant general, whose office suite access is controlled by an iris-scanning device.

"This allows the [biometrics center] to test the reliability and durability of their equipment, while we get the benefit of faster and more secure access control," said

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Lt. Col. Jim Hoyer, the West Virginia National Guard's Homeland Security liaison.

While both the iris- and fingerprint-centered biometric devices at the Coonskin Drive headquarters are being used on a trial basis, 10 portable, containerized biometric identification units developed through the BFC and manufactured in Morgantown are being used in the field in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Biometric Identification System for Access (BISA) modules were reportedly produced in response to the bombing of an American dining hall in Mosul, Iraq, in December 2004.

"BISA was integrated here in West Virginia under an extremely tight time constraint," said David M. Lohman, deputy director of the Biometrics Fusion Center. "Azimuth Corporation of Morgantown produced the first prototype within a month. Within another month, 10 of them were in the field and in use."

Nine of the 10 BISA units were delivered to the Persian Gulf last August by C-130s from Charleston's 130th Airlift Wing. The biometric units are used primarily to screen foreign personnel seeking to enter or work at American military bases.

"The BISAs have already been successful in interdicting unauthorized personnel" attempting to gain access to the bases, Lohman said.

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